

I write in support of Senate Bill 1145. My history with the commercial fishing industry dates back at least thirty years as a practicing attorney representing commercial fishermen statewide. In and prior to the year 2000 I represented the Michigan Fish Producers Association during the Consent Decree negotiations between the Federal Government, the State DNR, the various special interest groups and the Tribal constituencies. I have continued to follow the issues confronting this industry as I firmly believe if some revisiting of the current rules and regulations suffered by the commercial fishermen aren't adjusted through legislation such as Senate Bill 1145 the commercial fishing industry in this State will continue to find its numbers dwindling to the point of possible extinction.

The commercial fishing industry has seen its numbers reduced from over 100 active fishing enterprises 30 years ago to a low now of 13 on the entire Great Lakes. Compare this to the number of Tribal licenses of record exceeding 100 and a robust charter fishing industry. The nominal commercial fishing community can hardly be seen as a threat to these well established enterprises. Adding insult to injury the neighboring states of both Wisconsin and Minnesota, along with the Province of Ontario allow the commercial fishermen of those locales to harvest trout from Lake Superior. From a true legal standpoint the inability of our State commercial fishermen to harvest trout is truly a denial of equal protection.

What Senate Bill 1145 allows is simply the ability and within the sole discretion of the DNR to set a quota of allowable taking of this abundant species, trout. Do the opponents of this Bill actually believe the DNR is incapable of setting realistic numbers of fish available for harvest? Take also into consideration the number of quotas that may go unfilled by other entities, namely the Tribal groups of the State. I would like someone to explain to the commercial fishing industry why they are being prevented from enjoying a level playing field in this State and with its neighbors to the west and north.

To date I have not heard of any hard science, statistics or research that suggest setting a quota for a reasonable tasking of trout should not be allowed. What I have heard is the usual unsupported hyperbole that the industry will be decimated if SB 1145 is passed. Really? That doesn't say much for the protectors of this industry, the DNR and their ability to monitor this industry which they have overseen for decades. Instead of fake and misleading arguments being thrown about like confetti why not accept the fact that the commercial fishing industry deserves the same consideration for its important role in providing this country a product cherished by many and realistically only provided by a few struggling commercial fishing enterprises.

Its time to realize the benefit this industry brings to the State and other locales as opposed to cow towing to a industry based on the license revenue and tourism dollars generated.

Thank you for your time.

William W. Carmody, Citizen  
Chief Judge, 11th Circuit, Upper Peninsula

